DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 185 RC 012 018

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TITLE	Education for Rural Women: A Global Perspective.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Univ., Las Cruces. Bureau of Educational Research.; New Mexico State Univ., University Park. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Mar 80
CONTRACT	400-78-0023-Opt. 2
GRANT	NIE-G-79-0012
NOTE	45p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., 813 Airport Boulevard, Austin, TX 78702 (Stock No. EC-080, $5.00).
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Access to Education; Career Development; Culture Conflict; Educationally Disadvantaged; *Educational Needs; Educational Opportunities; Females; *Government Role; Research Needs; *Rural Population; Self Actualization; Self Determination; *Socioeconomic Status; Values; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS	Rural Education Centers; *Rural Women

ABSTRACT

Rural women come from many ethnicities, enjoy diverse social economic statuses, different family circumstances, and various levels of educational attainment. Of the 34-35 million rural women, a large percentage are plagued by poverty and lack of opportunity for education, employment, health care, and various social services. Rural people, who constitute one third of this country's people, also make up half of the nation's impoverished. While a greater number of rural women are now employed outside the family, they tend to be employed in low-paying clerical, service, and seasonal positions. For women who are ethnic minorities, aged, single head of households, or displaced housewives, the isolation of rural life adds an additional burden. This paper recognizes the urgent educational needs of rural women; summarizes research and statistical findings on rural women in the areas of education, income, employment, and values orientation; points out some cultural conflicts and dilemmas that may occur as a result of short-sighted, fragmented, and hastily implemented educational programs; presents a global perspective of the education of rural women which calls for social and policy changes and is multidimensional, grassroots based, and oriented to the culture and people of rural America; and delineates the needs for research, for regional rural centers, and for federal support in rural women's education. (Author/NEC)

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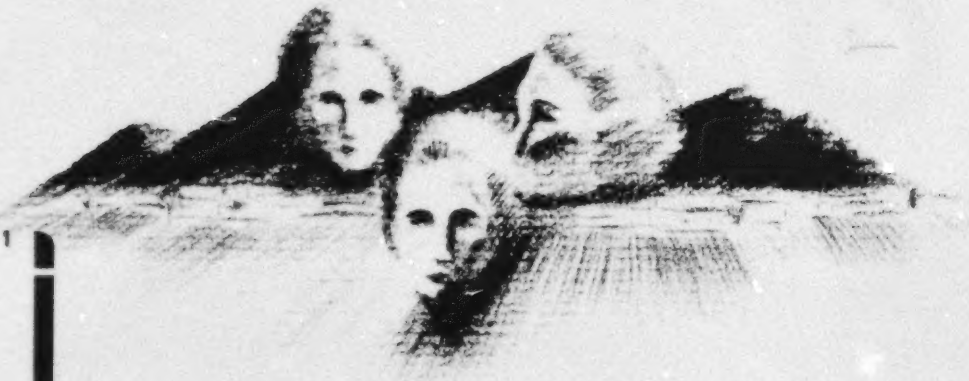

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EDUCATION FOR RURAL WOMEN: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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EDUCATION FOR RURAL WOMEN:

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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March 1980

Published by

Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC)
Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS)

in cooperation with

NIE-NMSU Project on Minorities
and Women's Research
Educational Research Center

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the People United for Rural Education for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions do not, however, necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools or People United for Rural Education.

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This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under contract no. NIE-400-78-0023- Opt. 2 and Grant no. NIE-G-79-0012. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or HEW.

Cover designed by: Becky Knee

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I. Introduction

The roots of America are her rural women, living in sparsely populated towns of less than 2,500 inhabitants. In the process of addressing their urgent and unmet educational needs, a global perspective is employed in this paper. Good rural programs will always have to be built upon the strengths of rural people and rural life. This perspective assumes a respect for the rural culture, sensitivity to the intricate social forces that shape rural life, and thoughtfulness about the conflicts and dilemmas educational changes may create in the rural American scene. This perspective further recognizes education as a life-long formal as well as informal learning process, which encompasses and enhances many aspects of rural life, and should provide solutions to a multitude of rural women's needs.

Rural women come from many ethnicities, enjoy diverse social economic statuses, different family circumstances, and various levels of educational attainment. Their strengths and diversity have significantly enhanced the cultures and traditions of this country. The rural women in the United States of America include the Chicana migrant farm workers in California, harvesting the fruit of the earth (Campesinas: Women Farmworkers, 1978). They are the Native American women of various tribes, living in isolated Indian reservations (Katz, 1977). They are Anglo women living in the mountainous Appalachian villages (Women of Appalachia, 1978). They may be black or white women in the heartland of America working on the land (Jensen, 1979). They are as diverse as the rest of America.

The inherent nature of geographic isolation has created special problems and unique needs that bond rural women into a group. Of the 34-35 million rural women, a large percentage are plagued by poverty and lack of opportunity--opportunity for education, employment, health care and various social services. While rural America is not categorically poor, rural people, who constitute one third of this country's people, also make up half of the nation's impoverished. Along with the trend of increased employment for urban and suburban women, a greater number of rural women are employed outside the family nowadays. However, rural women tend to be employed in low-paying clerical, service and seasonal positions. For women who are ethnic minorities, aged, single head of households or displaced housewives, the isolation of rural life adds an additional burden.

The needs and problems of rural women did not receive much national attention until the early seventies. In fact, Joyce and Leadley (1977) found few research studies on rural women before 1960. During the sixties, the civil rights movement triggered consciousness of their rights among women, which eventually led to an increased interest in this group of most neglected women. In 1976, the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs (NACWEP) conducted a major investigation of rural women and girls in the United States. The investigation was based on the premise that in spite of the heightened national concern with the issue of educational equity, very little attention had been directed toward rural women. The results of the investigation, which reviewed federal policies and programs and

conducted four regional consultations with rural women, revealed that this premise was more than confirmed (Clarenbach, 1977).

The NAWCEP investigation of rural women and girls' educational needs uncovered a dismal picture which may categorically be termed as one of "neglect." Some highlights of their findings include:

> ·With respect to the educational needs, little attention is being directed to rural girls and women--by either rural educators and advocates for rural development, or women's education advocates and providers.
>
> ·Such specific attention is critically needed. Assumptions have been made that males and females benefit equally from efforts to improve the quality of rural life, and that rural and urban women benefit equally from the recent national concern with women's status. The Council's investigation shows both these assumptions to be unfounded.
>
> ·Lack of specific program concern for the educational needs of rural women is matched by--and thus obscured by--a lack of concern in data gathering. Public statistics with specific categories for rural women are virtually non-existent.
>
> ·The educational needs articulated by the rural women involved in the Council's investigation relate to the broadest possible range of social issues--from health care to political involvement to the preservation of rural values and regional pride. (p. 10)

This paper recognizes these urgent educational needs of rural women and girls and intends to synthesize the existing literature and to propose an approach which may be useful to educators, policy makers and researchers in their attempt to provide equal educational opportunity to all.

The following section will provide a brief summary of research and statistical findings on rural women in the areas of education, income and employment, and values orientation. Section III will

point out some cultural conflicts and dilemmas that may occur as a result of short-sighted, fragmented and hastily implemented educational programs for rural women. Section IV will present a global perspective of the education of rural women, which calls for social and policy changes and is multidimensional, grassroots based, and oriented to the culture and people of rural America. A conclusion and suggestion will follow in Section V, in which the needs for research, for regional rural centers and for federal support in rural women's education are delineated. Throughout this paper, the term "rural women" will be used categorically to represent both rural women and girls.

II. Statistics and Research Findings on Rural Women

The paucity of available research and statistical information has made this review of literature on rural women a difficult task. The somewhat limited profile of rural women's education, income/employment status and value orientation presented here is based on the available literature. The information is generally incomplete when it comes to Hispanic rural women and almost totally lacking on Native American rural women. There is no information on Asian American rural women at all.

Education Status

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1971, 1976), with respect to educational attainment, virtually no difference was found between rural and metro (including urban and suburban) white women, and between rural white men and women. All had about 12.0 school years with relatively little change in this pattern occurring between 1970 and 1975.

However, data concerning black and Hispanic rural women revealed a different picture. In 1975, rural black women lagged 2.9 school years behind metro black women, an increased gap from 2.6 years in 1970. Rural black women living on farms finished an average of only 8th grade education in 1975, a full 4.0 grades behind metro black women. Rural black women had higher educational attainment than their male counterparts in both 1970 and 1975. During 1975, rural Hispanic women averaged 7.7 school years, trailing behind their rural

black sisters by 1.2, their rural white sisters by 4.5, and their metro Hispanic sisters by 2.4 years.

The information provided by the 1971 and 1976 U.S. Census is incomplete at best and misleading at times. For instance, the 1976 census was the first to include Hispanic information. In addition, there was no census on Native Americans and Native Alaskans' educational attainment in 1971 or 1976. However, it is generally believed that this group of women, most of whom live in geographically isolated and sparsely populated areas, have the lowest educational attainment of all ethnic groups. The high educational attainment/achievement of rural white women reported here may also be misleading in the sense that it may mask the situation at rural white women in certain geographic regions, such as Appalachia.

Income and Employment Status

Like their metro counterparts, rural women are being employed in larger and growing proportions. However, in most cases, rural women are engaged in low-wage, low-skill and low-status pursuits (Brown, 1977). In 1960, the median income for an employed urban woman was $2,203; for a suburban women it was $1,595; and the figure dropped to a meager $966 for a rural farm woman. Between the ages 20-25 and 40-45, a large number of rural women worked outside their homes. At all ages, employed rural farm women were more likely than metro women to be working half time. Three fourths of all employed women living on farms were engaged in non-farm jobs (Sweet, 1971). Their

contributions to family income often made the difference between middle-class living and near-poverty conditions, or between independence and reliance on social welfare assistance.

An additional bit of data on the income status of rural women was provided in Social and Economic Characteristics of the Population in Metro and Non-Metro Counties by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (1970). This report revealed that the median earnings for rural women were 50% below those for rural men, and $800 a year below those for metro women. Rural black women's median income was 42% below that of the rural white women. However, close to 44% of all rural poor families were headed by women.

The 1978 report by the California Commission on the Status of Women provided the results of a one-year descriptive study of the demographic characteristics, employment situations, and supportive services needs of women farmworkers in California. The study found that the average annual income for a woman farmworker in California was just under $3,000. Because women were confined to low-paying tasks their annual income was only one third that of male workers. Again, one third of the women were heads of households, and the majority of the women devoted their earnings to basic maintenance of their family.

The 1978 U.S. Bureau of the Census provided a more up-to-date picture of the relationship between the income and employment status of rural women and their educational attainment. Unfortunately, it again left out Hispanic and Native American rural women. Fratoe,

in his paper on rural women and education (1979), analyzed the rural women labor force status according to their levels of educational attainment. He noted that although it is commonly believed that higher educational attainment will lead to higher labor force participation for both men and women, this may be true of metro women but not of rural women. In 1977, with similar educational attainment, rural white women's employment rates were only from one half to two thirds the rates of their male counterparts. White women living on farms had the lowest labor participation rate, as compared to other rural whites, male or female, with the same amount of education.

Rural and metro black women with college degrees showed noticeably higher labor participation rates than did their equally educated white counterparts. This phenomenon may be explained by the recent trend toward an increasing number of black women obtaining college degrees as they move on to professional, managerial, and administrative opportunities (Flora and Johnson, 1978). Rural black women had a lower labor force participation rate, but the differences were much smaller than for whites. Fratoe (1979) concluded in his paper that higher educational attainment did not "pay off" as well for rural white women and that income and job "payoffs" for black and Hispanic rural women were the lowest, "conceivably reflecting the triple disadvantages of being non-metro, minority, and female" (p. 16). Despite the importance of schooling to job attainment and income, increasing education attainment <u>alone</u> did not increase employment and income status.

He suggested that focusing on nontraditional career options, along with the improved socioeconomic conditions, was necessary to make work/income "payoffs" equitable for rural women.

Heater and Martin (1979) found that among married rural women, education was a major determinant of their labor market participation. Thus, policies which raise the level and quality of education in rural women may still induce the largest increase in employment participation, at least for this group of married rural women. On the other hand, for other women who are single, separated, divorced or widowed, the increased growth in employment opportunities in the rural environment had the greatest influence on their employment status. This article suggests that significant differences exist between the labor force behavior of rural and metro women, and between married and other rural women. Specific manpower (personpower) policies may be needed to deal with employment problems of rural vs. metro women, and of married vs. other rural women.

Value Orientation

Dunne (1979), in her discussion of rural women's traditional value and contemporary pressures, concluded that rural women tended to be family oriented. The maternal orientation of rural women remains strong; they have more children, sooner, and are likely to stay home during the child-rearing years. They tend to perceive their sex-roles in very traditional ways, in the home with the children, and to be supportive to their husbands. Even though many rural women may work

on the farm or outside the family, "it was still regarded as unmanly or inappropriate for husbands to help in the house in many rural families" (Clarenbach, 1977, p. 24).

Rural women tend to have more traditional views in other spheres of their lives as well. They tend to be more religious, more conservative in their political and moral positions, and to value conformity, hard work and community interactions (Larson, 1978). They are the backbones of the community institutions that preserve and transmit rural cultures, such as the churches, the 4-H club, and the PTA.

Farm women were found to be more traditional in sex-role ideology than non-farm rural women, and this sex-role traditionalism was positively associated with actual fertility in a 1970 national fertility study (Johnson, 1977). However, a 25-year longitudinal study of rural women in Pennsylvania found little support either for the traditional sex-role or for the modern, equalitarian role. Instead, they uncovered considerable ambivalence and ambiguity in these women's sex-role attitudes.

On the issue of rural women's attitudes toward education and employment, a six-year longitudinal study of Deep South youth (Cosby and Steven, 1979) found that sex was a substantially more important social variable for rural youth in predicting the actual contents of occupational preferences than were either race or socioeconomic status. Rural girls narrowed their occupational preferences during senior and post-high school years to restrictive female pursuits while boys kept much broader preferences. Early marital plans had negative effects on the educational expectation for both sexes, especially for girls.

Different levels of educational aspirations and expectations were found among rural youth of different ethnicities (Edington, Pettibone and Heldt, 1975; Kuvelsky and Edington, 1976). Anglo rural youth tended to have the highest educational aspirations; Mexican-American was next, followed by Native American youth. Their educational expectations revealed similar but insignificant trends among these three ethnic groups. Although this general trend held true for rural women in several dimensions, there were, however, drastic sex differences among rural youth concerning their educational and occupational attitudes. There is less ethnic variability among rural girls in their educational expectations since many expected marriage as a career. The same low ethnic variability is found for occupational aspirations since most of them aspired for low professional, and clerical/sales occupations. Fewer girls than boys selected skilled, managerial and operative jobs, while only rarely did boys select low professional and clerical/sales positions as their occupational aspirations. The observed pattern of sex differences was found consistently across all ethnic groups.

III. Dilemmas in the Education of Rural Women

From the brief summary of relevant statistics and research studies presented earlier, it is apparent that the educational needs of rural women are urgent and unmet. It is also important to note that their needs are diverse and are tied strongly to their rural roots and rural ways of life. The education of rural women should be approached with extreme thoughtfulness and sensitivity--thoughtfulness of the intricate social forces that affect rural life and sensitivity to the value systems unique and precious to these people. There are several serious philosophical as well as practical dilemmas presented in attempts to provide better educational opportunities to rural women. Unless great care and consideration are given to the effort, these dilemmas may turn into runaway conflicts that have the potential of tearing apart the fundamental fabrics of rural life.

Cultural Conflict

The most fundamental dilemma is the cultural conflict between the more conservative and traditional rural attitudes and the push for changes inherent in education. This cultural conflict is not limited to issues relevant only to sex-roles, although they are probably the most noticeable ones. Along with progress, technological advances and social structure changes, the resultant conflicts may encompass all aspects of rural life. Rural educators and policy makers must address the issue of potential cultural conflict thoughtfully in order to create positive changes without destroying the essence of the rural ways of life. As Dunne (1978) puts it:

> If federal women's programs are to be launched without sensitivity to rural values and respect for rural life ways, country women will be better off without them.... For many years, reformers have gone out into the countryside armed with a powerful but erroneous assumption: that there is a cultural vacuum in rural America which good people should fill up with good urban ideas and good urban attitudes. Programs based on this assumption confuse more than they enlighten, and damage more than they build. Rural communities are fragile organisms; they have never had the need to develop the urban capacity to absorb "reform" without responding to it. Over the last ten years there have been several rural educational "improvement" efforts which have had serious deleterious effects on the communities they were intended to serve. (p. 21)

Perhaps there is some truth in Joyce and Leadley's (1977) suggestion that the "changing role of rural women" is a misnomer. "While it is true that women's roles are changing, it is more the case that the society is finally accepting and recognizing the value of the work women have always done" (p. 55). Despite the numerous hardships inherent in rural life, there are also pride, peace, fulfillment and close-knit family and community support that are precious to rural women. Rural women are actually the strength of rural life. These women, who dedicate themselves to their families, who work single-handed or alongside their men, who till the soil and harvest the fruit, are strong, independent and self-sufficient people. But their problems are many, and their needs are urgent. Educational policies and programs cannot be of help to them, if rural women, their work and their values, are being devalued in the process.

Good educational programs for rural women will always have to be built upon the strengths of rural people and rural life (Dunne, 1979). Changes are inevitable, especially when favorable social environment

and better educational opportunities are needed to address rural women's needs. We need to take a serious look at the possible impacts of a program, both positive and negative, before attempting to implement it. Only prudent and far-sighted planning can prevent the destruction of rural culture that may occur as a result of changes.

Career Development and Counseling

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs (NACWEP) highlighted the urgent need for educational guidance and counseling programs for rural women and girls:

> Rural girls and women need far greater exposure than they now receive to non-sexist, non-traditional occupational/career guidance information. They also need increased opportunitites to become acquainted with women actively engaged in occupations/professions, both traditional and non-traditional. They would benefit from some kind of accessible "one stop" information clearinghouses which monitor programs and other resources, and which might be utilized in addressing their various counseling needs. Teachers and school counselors should be provided pre-service and in-service training to make them aware of their own attitudes about both rural girls and women and the expectations which rural women and girls have. Some systematic procedure should be instituted for keeping teacher training institutions and school administrators and counselors informed both of current regulations and current non-sexist teaching and counseling materials. (Clarenbach, 1977, p. 15)

This statement summarizes the same needs for rural women's career development and counseling that were revealed in the literature review presented earlier. However, the sex-stereotypic attitudes and restrictive educational and occupational expectations of rural women are as characteristic of rural women as of rural men and are inherent in rural social structure. What would happen to rural social structure

if rural women changed their sex-roles and career expectations but rural men held on to their more traditional ones? Or perhaps we should ask whether it is even possible to change rural women's attitudes and expectations when the rural social environment and rural men remain the same?

Project Options--a career development project for rural women--demonstrated forcefully the need for co-educational career development as the project had to change in midstream from career development for rural girls only to a co-educational program. Dunne (1977) stated eloquently in the project report:

> Although this curriculum focuses on women, we feel that it is critically important for young men as well. First, most of the skills we teach are important to either sex--both women and men need to know how to make good decisions, how to plan their lives, how to deal with a difficult job market. Second, it is crucial that young men be as aware as young women of the problems which beset family life in rural America today. As workers, they must be sensitive to the destructive influences of sex stereotyping. As husbands, they must help forge new ways of household management and child rearing in an economy which increasingly requires married women to work. Finally, we believe that this curriculum will make both men and women more able to communicate with one another about problems and issues in daily life, especially in that large portion of daily life devoted to work or interpersonal relationships. No young woman, however well-informed or highly skilled, can work out family problems with an unwilling male partner. But young women and young men together, armed with the same body of information and skills, can begin to work out their problems together. This is the central task of our curriculum. (pp. 10-11)

Project Options also found that when educational activities do not relate to the large experiences one has outside the school, the efficacy of those activities is very limited. Unless the social environment in the rural world changes simultaneously, the career

counseling and guidance at school remains an artificial exercise. Students cannot make connections between learning and their lives, if they perceive school learning is in violation of their prevalent social expectations.

Limitation or Expansion of Options

Perhaps one of the key questions involved in the education of rural women is: Will the educational programs limit or expand these rural women's career and life options? On this issue, one is again reminded by the NAWCEP statement that there is as much concern with the system by which educational services are delivered as there is with the content of those services (Clarenbach, 1977). Perhaps one could also add that there is as much concern with the orientation of the services as there is with the system and the content of the services. The system that will deliver the services should seriously consider an "additive" orientation rather than a "substitute" one. In providing more educational opportunities to rural women, one should ask the question: Will the program expand career and life options so that rural women may go to urban cities and be competitive in their job markets, and/or may they also stay in the same rural location with a more fulfilled life if they prefer? Or will the program compel these rural women to migrate to urban cities in order to utilize their newly acquired skills?

The same can be said concerning the changing sex-roles that may result from increased educational opportunities and related programs designed to assist rural women. Nothing can be more antagonistic to

rural people, men and women both, than a rural program which is perceived as tooting the horn for "women's lib." Perhaps they have very good reasons for their resentment when their own culture is being infringed upon.

Rural women do have a traditional sex-role orientation. Their sex-roles prescribe that they serve as mothers, helpmates, and hard workers in the background, asking little and receiving little in return. Like the earth they live on, they are humble, patient, and always giving. Do we really want to replace all these virtues with competition, aggression, and assertion for the sake of progress? Or perhaps what we need is to value their existing sex-roles while providing opportunities for them to expand if they so desire.

A recent concept of androgyny proposed by Bern (1974; 1975) and by Spence and Helmerich (1978) may provide further insight on this issue of sex-role changes. Femininity and masculinity are not incompatible, as most people assume. Traditionally, masculinity and femininity have been conceptualized as being bipolar opposites of a single continuum; thus a person is supposed to be either agentic or communal, instrumental or expressive, but not both. The concept of androgyny implies that an individual can be both assertive and expressive, both masculine and feminine, depending upon the situation.

Research studies by and large have supported the concept of androgyny. Androgynous individuals score high on <u>both</u> masculine and feminine scales. They have been found to be more flexible than those who are mainly masculine or feminine, in that they are able to exhibit

situationally appropriate behavior whether it is assertion and independence or expression of feeling and nurturance. They have higher achievement motivation and self-esteem than masculine/feminine individuals or those who are low in both scales (Spence, Helmerich and Stapp, 1975).

Androgyny appears to be the most appropriate sex-role in a society where the traditional concepts of what is appropriate for men and women are changing. This sex orientation may be particularly appropriate for women to adopt when they are becoming liberated and are assuming non-traditional roles (Lester and Chu, 1980). It is of paramount importance to note here that this concept of androgyny calls for the incorporation and integration of the virtues from both the traditional masculine and feminine traits. The concept of androgyny implies an expansion of a person's existing sex-role orientation, to be more flexible, to create more options, rather than giving up one's sex-role and substituting one orientation for the other.

The concept of androgyny also implies that the process of transcending one's narrow sex-role orientation applies to both men and women equally. There is a need for rural women to incorporate more masculine traits in order to broaden their life and career options. There is just as much need for rural men to incorporate more feminine traits into their masculine orientation to become more complete persons. The processes of self-actualization for rural women and men are one, and are interdependent on each other.

Although this concept of androgyny appears to be an intellectually sound way of addressing the development of rural women's opportunities

and capabilities, again, it should be reiterated that this concept in itself is foreign to rural thinking. Thus, to introduce such a concept may underline the problematic aspects of change, which further supports the idea that this is one of the dilemmas that rural educators and policy makers need to be aware of.

IV. A Global Perspective of the Education of Rural Women

A global perspective of rural women's education assumes a respect for the rural culture and heritages, sensitivity to the social forces in rural life, and concern for the dilemmas educational changes may create. Such a perspective appears to be the only effective way that the educational needs for such a large and diverse group of women may be approached. Whether the educational program is designed for literacy training, vocational/career skills and development, child care/health education, or continuing education leading to higher education, if it employs a global perspective, it will have the following characteristics: it is built upon rural culture, involves social and policy changes, provides multidimensional services, and has a grassroots orientation.

Rural Culture as a Foundation

The program will be built upon rural values in general, and the unique contribution of rural women particularly. Studies have found that rural women tend to have low self-esteem and to lack self-confidence (Peterson, Offer and Kaplan, 1978). It is of ultimate importance that educational programs recognize the positive elements of rural life and the contributions of rural women, and not impose urban lifestyles upon rural women (Clarenbach, 1977). In addition, rural women themselves also need programs that will teach them about their cultural values and rural heritages, as well as about the contributions they have made to this country throughout history.

In preserving rural value, an additive rather than a substitutive orientation will always be emphasized. Their education should be based on what rural women already have and should expand their skills to make additional career and life options possible. It will not substitute rural women's more "traditional" sex-role with a mere "liberal" one; rather it may provide rural women with a more flexible and "androgynous" orientation which encompasses the virtues of both femininity and masculinity. Ultimately, however, rural women should have the option of selecting any sex-role and value orientation they feel most comfortable with, rather than have urban educators prescribing for them. Educational programs should not attempt to urbanize rural women's capabilities and attitudes, which would reduce rural women's only viable option to urban migration, an "option" that is as restrictive as what rural women had previously.

Social and Policy Changes

The existing poverty, isolation and deprivation of rural women is largely the long-term result of societal neglect and biased reward and recognition systems. Under current socioeconomic conditions, equal educational attainment by rural women cannot entirely eliminate work/income differences based on sex in rural communities (Fratoe, 1979). Compared to men with equal or even less schooling, many rural women will continue to work in low-paying and low-status positions, if they find employment in their restrictive labor market at all. Educational programs designed solely to provide rural women with more education may have only limited success in providing women with equal opportunities in our society.

The thrust to encourage rural women to obtain more education and skills in order to participate equally in the society will not be effective unless it is matched by concomitant social policy changes in rural environment. Those policy and social changes should include: increased number and variety of jobs in the rural employment market; better transportation and/or the availability of mass public transit systems; better and available health and child-care facilities; reduced sex bias in hiring and promotion; a government policy to enforce equal pay for equal work; and the opportunities for rural women to be gainfully self-employed.

As we enter the 1980's, we see a picture of continued declining resources, limited employment opportunities and possible economic recession. In this coming decade, the struggle for equal participation of rural women will be uphill. Only when educational programs are implemented along with a changing and favorable social environment, will rural women's dream of self-fulfillment and self-determination be actualized.

Multidimensional Service

The program should be multidimensional in that it will incorporate a variety of related educational services. Because of the distance between rural centers, the delivery costs are extremely high, and the number of recipients is low. Therefore, the educational services provided should be geared to the diverse needs of the local people in a comprehensive and well-coordinated way in order to produce the best effects in the least expensive manner.

Besides continuing educational and vocational/career training, some of the additional services may include: child-care and development centers for rural children; health education, including nutrition, home, and child-care training; clinical community health centers; information services concerning social welfare, CETA, and other financial, employment and educational assistance; counseling and legal guidance; leadership training for rural women; and services networks for rural women in the region. Although rural women have many urgent needs, those needs are not isolated from each other (Women in Rural America, 1977). Education programs have the potential of providing a comprehensive link to reach a variety of these women's social and financial needs that are closely tied to their educational problems.

The Council on Appalachian Women provides a good working model of this multidimensional approach. This council is geared to inspire Appalachian women to develop and use their mental, physical and spiritual resources through a variety of activities. It provides information about funds and services that are available to Appalachian women, maintains a communication network among these women, supports data collection activities by Appalachian women on their local census and needs, provides counseling and job placement services, sponsors a project to reduce sex stereotyping and discrimination, and establishes a crisis center where women can get assistance with traumas such as rape, wife-beating and child abuse (Women of Appalachia, 1978).

The day-care center in White Oak, Tennessee, is another example of how a program can be multidimensional in addressing a multitude of

rural women's needs. Started as a day-care center, it quickly expanded to include outreach visits to additional children in the region. Soon the trailer that houses the day-care center became a community center which offers a variety of activities and whose door stays open all the time. At night, eight college courses in English, math, history, health and child care are taught there, besides adult education and vocational skills courses. The center also sponsors an arts and crafts organization which promotes the handwork of the Appalachian women and works with children and older people to preserve traditional arts. The trailer is also a used clothing store to make money and to provide clothing for the needy. Fifteen local women, most of whom have never worked before, are employed at the day-care center. Another thirty-five work in a local crafts cooperative which the director of the center, Tilda Kemplan, helped to organize. In addition, about 150 local teen-agers received summer jobs through five children's recreation and feeding programs in the area (Women in Appalachia, 1978).

Education involves a life-long process of informal as well as formal learning. Only when education is approached from the many aspects of real life that are crucial and close to rural women, can education become a personal and meaningful experience to them.

Grassroots Orientation

The 1977 NACWEP investigation of rural women's educational needs was monumental in many aspects. The most significant aspect perhaps is that for the first time "someone has asked us rural women to tell them what we need and want, instead of speaking for us" (Clarenbach, 1977, p. 21). A program based on a global perspective will insist

that rural women be included in the program to delineate their needs, to structure the program, to make decisions, and to implement the program. The education of rural women should be of rural women, for rural women, and by rural women.

New educational programs may be effectively incorporated into existing community centers and communication channels, such as churches, 4-H clubs, agricultural extension services, PTA organizations, social welfare offices and public schools. Many educational programs may be sponsored by CETA, Title XX, etc., which already have established their contact with rural women at a grassroots level.

To reach rural women scattered in isolated areas, educational programs will have to go to them, rather than the other way around. Mobile library and mobile classrooms are some of the possible solutions. Correspondence programs, credits by testing, and giving credits for life experience are all viable means to provide education to rural women. Mass media production of television (closed and open circuits) and radio curriculum materials are possibly the most inexpensive and effective ways to bring education to rural women.

An earlier study found that mass media was the primary source by which rural women received information (Bostian and Ross, 1965). The study also revealed that the farm women were in contact with mass media, the major form of which was television, for an average of six to seven hours daily. The number of rural homes with television sets has increased drastically since the 1960's, and it is expected that television will continue to affect rural women even more than ever

before in every sphere of their lives. Following the successful example of Children's Television Workshop and borrowing the model of Sesame Street, perhaps some educational programs can be effectively developed, either for national or for local regional uses.

There are two exemplary extension delivery systems in the nation which use the newer technology of electronic mass media to reach rural women in isolated areas. They are the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the satellite system of the Appalachian Regional Commission, both of which use well-developed county- and community-based channels for information delivery. The University of Wisconsin-Extension has pioneered several successful programs, including "Accent on Living" and "The American Pie Forum." The former covers a wide range of subjects, and the latter provides career guidance in an entertaining manner to people who have not completed high school. This extension service center also has established the Educational Telephone Network and is able to conduct conferences, staff meetings, classes, and training sessions for a target population of 20,000 people in 120 different locations through its sending-receiving outlets.

In order to deliver educational programs to rural women, we will have to work at the grassroots level, taking the programs to them. There should be more programs adopting the Wisconsin and Appalachian models and utilizing mass media in their educational delivery systems.

V. Suggestion and Conclusion

The coming decade of the 1980's will be a difficult and decisive period for rural women in their struggle for self-determinism and self-actualization. If rural women's programs must compete with other metro programs, sufficient attention will not be paid to rural women's needs, especially with dwindling resources predicted for the coming years. Concerned organizational efforts from the federal and state governments, from higher education and public schools, and from rural educators and researchers will have to be made in order to establish educational assistance to rural women as a high-priority item. Many rural women have a built-in feeling of powerlessness and a life-long expectation of "couldn't," "can't" and helplessness (Women in Appalachia, 1978). However, as revealed in NACWEP hearings, these rural women also long for the opportunitites to speak for themselves and to have their voices heard and their viewpoints solicited. They want to be significant and contributing members not only to their families but of society at large. Most importantly, "they need the opportunity to become independent persons, to control their own lives, to have a role in the formulation of public policy, and to share somewhat equitably in the fruits of our society" (Clarenbach, 1977, p. 11).

The global perspective of rural women's education employed in this paper may be useful to rural educators, policy makers and researchers in providing education to rural women in a more thoughtful and sensitive way. This global perspective stresses the importance of the total cultural and socioeconomic context of the educational programs

and proposes a grassroots orientation to provide educational programs to rural women at their levels. It also encompasses a host of related services to meet a multitude of rural women's needs in the most comprehensive manner. Most of all, this global perspective centers around rural women as whole persons--their needs and concerns are the central parameters of the programs to be designed for them.

The implementation of educational programs with such a global perspective will not be possible without first attending to some unmet but fundamental needs. We need more research studies about rural women and their needs and concerns; we need more grassroots-oriented rural centers to coordinate various services for rural women in the surrounding rural regions; and we need the federal government's support for rural programs and for policy enforcement.

Need for Research on Rural Women

Joyce and Leadley (1977) documented the lack of research on rural women. Among the existing studies, much is unintentionally sexist. The contributions women have made in rural communities and farm work, as well as their supportive, expressive, informal and private side of life have almost always been ignored as a focus of research: "The most comprehensive statement that can be made about the research of women in rural areas is that there has been a lack of it" (p. 53).

The lack of research on rural women reflects the historical neglect of this group of women by our society. This lack of information further obscures and masks the severity of their problems. In order to implement educational programs with a global perspective for

rural women, we need to gather more information on their lives, their attitudes, and their aspirations.

The lack of information and research studies on rural women of minority ethnicity is especially critical. Recently, more information has been collected on rural Hispanic women. However, to date little information is available on Native American women, a group that is almost entirely rural, scattered in the most remote and isolated regions, with the lowest educational attainment and income levels, and whose needs for education are undoubtedly the most urgent and unmet. The striking absence of any information on Asian American rural women, a group we know absolutely nothing about, is another area of serious concern.

Not only do we need more research on rural women (especially minority women), more importantly, we need good and unbiased research studies. Joyce and Leadley (1977) delineated a number of areas that need to be studied. These include: the contribution of women to the farm/rural success; their role in decision making; their adjustment and status in marriage; division of labor and utilization of time in and out of the home; conflicts between family and employment; the social dynamics in the rural attitude formation and its changes; the effects of, and the adjustment to, sex-role changes; the availability of child care service, public transportation, health services, industry mix in local rural settings, and the effects of these factors on rural women's educational/employment status; social factors such as migration patterns, family structure, socialization process, rural life styles, etc.; among many others.

Besides our need for more statistical information and research studies on rural women, we also are in need of different kinds of research that are more sensitive to capture the informal, supportive, and expressive aspects of their private lives. Historical, descriptive and case studies as well as oral history and ethnographical techniques are probably the most suitable kinds. Jenson's (1979) book on farm women, With these hands: women working on the land, 1979, Cotera's (1976) book on Hispanas, Medicine's (1978) and Katz's (1977) perspectives on Native American women and the profiles of Appalachian women presented in Appalachia (1978), all have provided rich and colorful insights to the lives of these women, their hopes and despairs, their loves and dreams, and their struggles for self actualization. We need more good research like that presented in these studies.

Need for Rural Education Centers

In order to employ a global perspective in educational programs, we need to have more regional educational centers, which should be located in the middle of vast rural areas in order to represent the specific rural features that are unique to the region. Such regional centers will be able to coordinate a multitude of services needed by rural people in the region. Their services could conceivably include research and data collection; regular, continuing, and vocational educational delivery; leadership training workshops for rural women; technical assistance for grants application and management; mass media educational materials development; cooperative extension services; mobile library and lectures; vocational development and counseling

services; and health education and agricultural extension programs aimed at women.

In order to be sensitive to the rural women in their culturally, geographically and economically diverse settings, such regional rural educational centers are necessary. For example, a rural educational center in New Mexico (a state which is almost entirely rural) would address the needs of Native Americans in the Southwest, as well as the American Mexicans who constitute almost half of the population in the region. The needs and values of these groups are drastically different from those of other rural women in the nation.

There are already several successful regional rural centers, such as the University of Wisconsin-Extension Services and the Council on Appalachian Women, a satellite system of the Appalachian Regional Commission, described earlier. These two successful models provide examples and demonstrate the need for additional regional rural educational centers. Information about these and other models should be disseminated by means of centralized collection and dissemination information centers, perhaps through expansion of the existing ERIC facility on Rural Education and Small Schools.

Need for Federal Policy and Support

When we look at the gravity of the tasks involved in rural women's education, at the conflicts we may have to face, and at the high costs associated with the educational delivery, it is apparent that the federal government's commitment to assist rural women will be the key element enabling success at this juncture.

NACWEP's investigation of national programs and federal policies on rural women reported only insufficient efforts and minimal programs and recommended more federal government involvement in correcting these deficiencies. Some specific suggestions were included:

(1) The U.S. Office of Education should undertake a vigorous campaign to inform the public about legislative services and programs which assist in eliminating sex-bias in education.

(2) The Office of Education should coordinate educational programs to discover the educational needs of rural women in their culturally, geographically, and economically diverse settings so that appropriate programs can be developed to fulfill their needs.

(3) The Department of Health, Education and Welfare should review the criteria, guidelines, and procedures for grants management in order to include a greater number of rural women in grants support and utilization.

A global perspective of rural women's education assumes a concomitant social environmental change in the rural world. The federal government should create incentives to bring about a more favorable labor market in the rural settings, should provide more funding for rural programs of a broad scope, including health and child care services, should improve the transportation system, and should enforce the policy of equal pay for equal work as well as facilitate the education of rural women generally. The federal government should also perceive the

difficulty involved in cost effectiveness of rural education and should recognize that a stable funding pattern is needed to bring long-term results.

Looking at the latest publication of the National Institute of Education on its sponsored projects and publications related to the issue of sex equity in education (October 1979), one is heartened to see that studies on rural women are being stressed and that an increasing number of research studies on rural women are currently being funded. We look forward to the continued support of the federal government in helping rural women to help themselves.

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Autobiography

Lily Chu was born in China on January 4, 1942 to Hai-Ping Chu and Zanna Wan, who were from long lines of humble peasant roots. Lily graduated in 1963 with a B.S. degree in Agriculture from the National Taiwan University. Subsequently, she came to the United States to further her education and landed up in Albuquerque, New Mexico where she lived for nine years. During this period of time, she worked as a medical technologist in local hospitals, and studied at the University of New Mexico where she eventually received her M.A. in Psychology in 1970 and Ph.D. in Educational Psychology in 1973.

Upon her graduation, she went to the Lake Superior State College in Michigan and taught there as an assistant professor for four years. In 1977, she moved back to New Mexico with her family. Currently, she has graduate faculty status in the Department of Educational Management and Development at New Mexico State University, and is the Director of the NIE-NMSU Project on Minorities & Women's Research, a project that has been funded by the National Institute of Education. Her present position has provided her with the opportunity to assist other minorities and women to engage in research, and to pursue her own research interest which is in the areas of social psychology and its applications to education. She has published about twenty research studies on locus of control, conformity, attribution process, androgyny, self-efficacy in multicultural education, women in non-traditional careers, and others dealing with research on minorities.

Lily is married to Harold Bergsma. They have two children, Phyllis and Harley. They have a 26-acre farm south of Las Cruces where pecans and chili are grown.

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